

Foreword for the Special Issue on Governance Challenges in Small-scale Forestry

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During the last 20 years, the international dialogue on forests has been resulting in considerable changes in the way forest policy and management are perceived. The introduction of the concept of *sustainable development* in the forestry sphere, connected with the extent of *globalisation* in economy and society, has led to a commonly shared vision on what should be the objectives and instruments of both public and private management of forests, thus progressively leading to policy and institutional changes at the national and local levels.

Worldwide laws and regulations, as well as programs and sometimes administrative structures, are being modified to fit to these new visions and challenges, which materialise *a change in paradigm* for forestry decisions. Supposed to provide a substitute to the conventional means to govern, the concept of *governance* (as opposed to *government*) has been rapidly brought to the scene, as a kind of password for those in favour of radical reform in the forestry field, promoting market mechanisms instead of State regulations, and multi-stakeholders processes in place of command-and-control rules for decision-making. This transformation has major impacts on the management of small-scale forests.

Such a transformation has been more or less progressive in various countries, depending on the capability of institutions to adapt to changes that are directly linked to the role and importance of State in public decision-making. In developing and transitioning countries, as well as in the pan-European context, radical change has taken place, because the initial situation differed greatly from that prescribed by the global dialogue on forests.

After at least one decade of forest policy reforms, the time has come to draw a first provisional analysis of the significance of the changes which occurred. And some questions are raised in this context. Is the traditional knowledge accumulated

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in the small-scale rural estates still recognized as relevant by policy makers and local managers in the new global context of policy formulation? Do these new modes of governance promote a new vision of small-scale forestry? Are there specific drivers and barriers to change in small-scale estates? How can the gap between a global policy discourse and the concrete local realities be bridged?

Formulating a response to these difficult questions was an objective of the International Symposium on 'Small-scale Rural Forest Use and Management: Global Policies *versus* Local Knowledge', held in Gérardmer, France, from June 21 to 24, 2008, and organised by the IUFRO 3.08 working group on 'Small-scale forest management' (J. Herbohn co-ordinator), in co-operation with the IUFRO 6.12 working group on 'Analysis and evaluation of forest policies and programmes' (G. Buttoud co-ordinator) and the IUFRO task force on 'Traditional forest knowledge' (J. Parrotta co-ordinator), which was the origin of the papers published in this special issue of the *Small-scale Forestry*.